

CAREER

The diverse world of Public Health and why you should care



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

RAIAN ABEDIN

'Public Health' is a moniker that keeps popping up in any discussion involving healthcare and personal well-being. The idea behind it is vast— almost too wide to fit in one article. But it all fits neatly under an umbrella built upon the concentrated effort by diverse groups all working together to prioritise human health.

Public Health is also the field most crucial in informing communities and societies about healthcare and the importance of their physical and mental well-being— make no mistake, while all this would be impossible without biologists and medical professionals, Public Health as a field is vast and houses anyone willing to bring about positive impacts at societal levels.

Let's understand this field from its fundamentals: in Bangladesh, the number of

societal barriers to healthcare, especially for structurally marginalised communities and those dwelling in villages away from cities, is nearly uncountable. The most important ways to bring about positive changes in these spaces are by working with the government to establish new healthcare policies and by informing communities about the numerous healthcare problems they may be facing. This is where Public Health comes in, their task is manifold— to carry out research and to also find ways to make use of it in our communities, and for this reason, the team needed is also vast and diverse.

Shafayet Sheikh*, a research assistant from BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, shared his experiences.

"The thing about Public Health is that we are active at several levels, be it at a community, local government, or even national government levels, we try to mobilise our research to bring about important changes. And every year, the scope keeps getting bigger and bigger, there are new things to research and new technological innovations like digital health which allows healthcare to be

carried out in a completely new way. All of this is either studied or put into practice by us."

He further added, "We try to understand Public Health as an umbrella, not a bubble, under which almost every sort of work can fit. Of course, in the research department, we need our healthcare experts. But we are always making use of qualitative and quantitative research that may not even be related to biology directly. We need sociologists, business experts, humanities majors, and much more to work together to make these changes happen."

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to also be analysed, and then have the information relayed to the masses, and then to the government to have major changes take shape via policies is an enormous undertaking. It cannot comprehensively be carried out by one group of people. From field research to policymakers, all end up playing a role in this field. Hence, in many cases, Public Health as a field does not have strict limitations on one's educational background. Undergraduate majors from all fields are welcome to join, though those who carry out a Master's in Public Health tend to have an advantage.

"If people join this field after doing a Master's in Public Health, they always have more experiential knowledge in the various fields frequented by Public Health such as Biostatistics and Epidemiology. Once you join, however, you are working at the same level as those who do not have a Master's degree." Shafayet Sheikh further added.

Starting off your career in Public Health may look like a number of things— it may constitute working as an on-field researcher, or it may require you to work in speech pathology, working with people facing speech impairment issues. No matter the case, Public Health is a sector that generally is involved in the wellbeing of the people, both at an interpersonal and at a societal level. Be it the steps taken to ensure safety in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, or the effort made to improve understanding of sexual and reproductive health among women and marginalised communities— the reaches of Public Health stretch far and beyond, and its impact can be felt in our daily lives.

